

**Council on Postsecondary Education  
Committee on Equal Opportunities  
February 20, 2006**

**Eastern Kentucky University  
Campus Visit Report**

**ACTION:** The Council staff recommends that the committee adopt the report of its campus visit conducted at Eastern Kentucky University October 17-18, 2005, and that the report be forwarded to the ECU president along with a request that a report regarding its success be given at the April 17, 2006, CEO meeting.

The Committee on Equal Opportunities is charged with monitoring institutional progress toward implementing *The Kentucky Plan for Equal Opportunities* and the Partnership Agreement with the U. S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. Monitoring is completed through data analysis and campus visits.

The CEO visited Eastern Kentucky University October 17-18, 2005, to meet with campus leaders, students, faculty, and other members of the campus community. The meetings were designed to give committee members an opportunity to hear from selected members of the university community. Campus visits are not meant to gather scientific, empirical data, but rather to learn first-hand about the success of equal opportunity plan implementation on the ECU campus.

Eastern Kentucky University is one of five regional public postsecondary institutions that offers general and liberal arts programs at the undergraduate and master's level. Situated near the heart of the Bluegrass, in Richmond, ECU's main campus is easily accessible from all parts of Kentucky and surrounding states. Approximately 15,000 part-time, full-time, traditional, and non traditional students attend classes at ECU. University administrators stated that their goal is to promote and support an inclusive climate that respects and celebrates diversity by attracting, developing, and educating a diverse student, faculty, and staff population. The university has made steady progress towards implementing the objectives of *The Kentucky Plan* since the 2000 campus visit. Under the leadership of President Joanne Glasser, ECU maintains a strong commitment to diversity. Information provided to the CEO showed that some improvements have been made since the 1998 and 2000 visits, resulting in varying degrees of success. In some instances, prior concerns raised by members of the university community, as well as the CEO, have been addressed.

President Glasser's commitment to diversity and to the *1997 Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act* (House Bill 1) has offered opportunities to further stimulate and embrace diversity through programs that have been developed and implemented, (for

example, her the Joanne Glasser Diversity Scholarship, presented to one undergraduate each academic year, for four years of funding). Her vision for the university is also identified in her strategic plan, *Moving Forward Together*, which consists of the following strategies: (1) to promote and support an inclusive climate that respects and celebrates diversity by attracting, developing and educating a diverse student, faculty, and staff population; (2) the University Diversity Office Strategic Plan; (3) the Kentucky Plan for Equal Opportunities in Postsecondary Education; (4) the definition of diversity as defined by the University Diversity Committee; and (5) a comprehensive statistical analysis of Eastern Kentucky University based on ethnographic data.

Since the 2000 campus visit, ECU has developed a Comprehensive Plan for University Diversity. The diversity plan incorporates the ECU strategic plan, *Moving Forward Together*. The CEO makes the following recommendations as a result of the information gathered during the discussion:

### ***Admissions, Advising, and Diversity Initiatives***

1. The university should consider conducting a desk audit of its advising policies and procedures and use the results to develop guidelines that are consistent campus wide. Students reported that the advising and support services are not consistent across departments. (It was noted that incoming freshmen appear to struggle because they are unable to connect with an effective support system. For example, students said that advising may take place in the freshman year, but many students are forced to seek support and guidance from upperclassmen as they move beyond the first-year experience).
2. The university should continue to use targeted marketing materials but also the materials should be integrated into the general marketing program of the university to ensure a consistent message regarding diversity being received by the public.
3. The university should create scholarship opportunities for transfer students from the community and technical colleges, and align scholarship policies with time to graduation, particularly if the average time to graduation is six years.
4. The university should use the detailed student retention data, by department and college, to develop or strengthen programs and strategies to increase retention and investigate the value of establishing a retention committee to focus exclusively on the retention of underrepresented minority groups at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.
5. The university should consider linking several key programs/services (degree audit, faculty advising, and retention) to produce an official outcome that informs students of their status toward fulfilling the requirements for graduation at the beginning of each academic year. A formal process should be established for notifying students of their status.
6. Graduate program scholarships and teaching assistantships are often essential to minority students' decision to enroll in graduate degree programs; ECU administrators should

strongly encourage the financial aid staff to familiarize themselves with scholarships and assistantships designated specifically for minority groups to provide meaningful and supportive assistance.

7. The committee strongly encourages administrators of the graduate school to implement strategies that identify and enroll students from ECU undergraduate programs, rather than looking solely outside to identify and enroll students to diversify the graduate programs.

### ***Communications***

1. The university should assist students by clearly communicating policies for applying for and repaying student loans. Students stated that if they stop out and attempt to return they must pay off all student loans before being allowed to re-enroll.
2. Students claim that African American and white students are treated differently when hosting events on campus. For example, it was reported that African American organizations are required to pay for security, while white organizations are not. The university should address the issue and also post in a conspicuous place the policies that govern the provision of security at campus events.
3. African American students seem to be conflicted as to which of the program areas identified by the university they should expect to address their concerns or needs among the admissions office, the affirmative action office, equal opportunity office, the diversity office, and the office of multicultural affairs. The university should clearly communicate to students its expectations and the role of each area.
4. Students claim that the honors program has not been publicized very well. The claim that the poor rate of participation among minorities in the program result from a lack of information. The university should communicate the value of the honors program to further increase minority representation. It may be useful to emphasize the program during freshman orientation or other special programs directed at African Americans or other minority groups.
5. Students claim that ECU policies regarding student misconduct on and off campus are not clear and are not applied in a fair and open manner. The university should review its policies and the manner in which they are applied to student behavior and address any unfair application of the policy.

### ***Advancement and Upward Mobility***

1. The committee strongly encourages the university to develop innovative strategies to increase the representation of African Americans at the highest level of policy development, particularly since such positions rarely become available.
2. The university should consider implementing a recognition and rewards program that publicly acknowledges the success of deans and chairs for achieving diversity objectives, i.e., the recruitment and retention of African American faculty, students, and staff.

3. The committee strongly encourages the president and provost to hold deans and chairs accountable for achieving diversity during the formal evaluation; this approach may help departments and colleges to view diversity as a priority.
4. A formal, well-communicated program should be established to assist selected junior faculty and staff interested in career advancement or completion of the terminal degree.
5. The university should strongly encourage other departments to replicate practices of the Department of Environmental Health Sciences (undergraduate) and the Master of Public Health programs to support their effort to attract more diversity among students, faculty, and staff. (Students and faculty in those areas acknowledged that administrators and members of the departments created a warm and welcoming environment and are open and supportive).
6. It was reported that currently the university does not require that diversity exists on search committees or in the candidate pools for faculty and key administrative positions. The university should immediately implement a policy that assures access and opportunity by requiring a diverse search committee and candidate pool as searches take place. The office of the provost should certify diversity for all searches for faculty, and the affirmative action office should certify the presence of diversity for all other searches.

### ***Student Issues***

1. The committee strongly encourages the university to expand its efforts to bring greater levels of diversity to the faculty of all colleges and departments on campus. African American undergraduate and graduate students stated that not enough African American faculty members are employed by colleges and departments at ECU. Some students claim that they have never had an African American professor for a class during their tenure at ECU.
2. Students would like the university to expand and clarify its programs aimed at increasing the presence of African American students and graduates in full-time and part-time positions. Students have difficulty understanding the university's policy regarding "grow-your-own" programs and the manner in which those programs are implemented.
3. Students claim that currently no African American professional staff is employed in the financial aid office at ECU. Students claim that the absence of minorities in this office impacts African American students' access to funding, as well as employment opportunities.
4. Students claim that support services for minority students are limited. The committee believes this perception results from communications deficiencies and strongly encourages the university to inventory and clearly communicate to all incoming freshmen and transfer students information regarding academic support services, organizations, contact names, telephone numbers, E-mail addresses, and faculty and staff office locations. (A resource

guide containing this information may be an option. The guide could be distributed to all minority students as a resource to connect minority students, in particular those that are newly admitted).

More detail is provided in the campus visit report. ECU will be asked to report at the April 2006 meeting on its progress toward implementing the recommendations.